

ABSTRACT

An apparatus for inflating and deploying an aerostat having a nose section and a tail section includes a cylindrical container for housing the deflated portion of the aerostat. The cylindrical container is formed with an open end and defines a longitudinal axis. A feed hose extends from a gas source, through the container to a hose end that projects axially from the open end of the container. The deflated aerostat is initially folded to juxtapose the nose and tail of the aerostat. Next, the nose of the aerostat is attached to the feed hose end and the remaining portion of the aerostat is folded and inserted into the container. As the tail section is inflated outside of the container, aerostat cloth is drawn from the container. A mechanism is provided to control the release of cloth from the container and maintain pressure in the inflating aerostat within a predetermined range.